

## Church Federation in Vermont.

[Extracts from report by Geo. F. Wells, B. S., in First Annual Report of Church Federation of Executive Committee of the Inter-Church Conference.]

The leading federated church in Vermont is at Williston. This federation began in 1898, when Congregational and Methodist Churches sought to work and worship together in order to get larger results from the same resources. Each society had both church and parsonage. The Congregational society was too weak to support a local pastor. There was a desire for more strength and vitality on the part of both churches. The whole work from the first was mutual. Neither society has lost its organic or denominational identity. No articles of federation were drawn up, but each society agreed to the proposition made by the other. The federation is based upon a business proposition in behalf of better preaching and larger Christian reality. This proposition concerned the relative amounts to be paid for preaching and running expenses by each society, and how the church buildings should be used. The Congregational parsonage has been sold. The two pastors of this federation have been Methodists. The Methodist Church pays \$600 and the Congregationalist, \$250, and the other expenses are allotted according to the same proportion. Benevolent funds are raised by personal effort and they go into their respective denominational channels. No changes in belief nor polity have been required. The spirit of worship has been enriched by better preaching, larger congregations, and a new fellowship. The Lord's Supper is administered to the united congregation sometimes in the Congregational form and sometimes in the Methodist form, but usually the two have been combined—the Methodist pastor officiating with the deacons to pass the elements.

The two principal hindrances to this Williston federation have been the excessive denominational feeling of a few members of each church, and the getting of a basis of appeal for non-local benevolences. The first has been removed by the death of the parties, and the other by a revival of missionary interest so that the missionary collections have been increased fifty per cent. in the last year. Williston is a typical average New England town in which the best in the Puritan tone of life is remarkably persistent. The French Catholic population is increasing rapidly. In every respect the federation is declared to be a success. It is an improvement on former conditions. The spiritual temper of the whole church is remarkably improved. It is a decided step in advance in the solution of the religious problem of one country town.

At Castleton a federated organization with one strong pastor takes the place of sadly decadent Congregational and Methodist societies. The two churches still maintain their denominational identity. They unite for work and worship under articles of federation which cover the following main points: The managing board is a Prudential Committee consisting of six members from each church. The joint congregation meets in the Methodist church from November to May and in the Congregational the rest of the year. New members join the church they freely choose. The Young People's Societies and Sunday Schools have organically united. Denominational moneys are raised by each society separately. A common hymn book and order of worship have been provided by the Committee. When worship is in the Congregational church the deacons assist in the communion, while the Methodist form is used in that church. The essential Christian gospel is to be preached, without "isms." The pastors are alternately Methodist and Congregational.

The difficulties of this federation have been denominational jealousy, hindrance from troublesome persons, and the expense and inconvenience of the double set of buildings. These are being overcome. Castleton has always been an educational center, though in this respect, as industrially, its golden age has passed. This federation is a brave attempt to react against religious and social degeneration, and as such it is proving a decided success.

A successful temporary church federation is at Lincoln, a mountain town of 1,200 people. The Christian, Free Baptist, and Methodist denominations are involved here, with two sets of church buildings, Union and Methodist. The Rev. J. P. Thurston has been pastor of this church since May, 1905. Economic necessities impelled the present plan which is based on a simple business proposition. It is a federation for worship. The Union Church building is used in summer and the Methodist in winter. Thus far it has been a spiritual as well as financial advantage. The secret of its success is that federation is held as a means to an end in evangelism.

No more significant specimen of federation work can be found in New England, if in the entire country, than the merging of the Christian and Congregational churches at Randolph. The result is not a Federated Church, nor a Union, but one Congregational Church.

The formation of the new Congregational church at East Charleston out of decadent Methodist, Baptist and Universalist societies presents a specimen of what church federation, when needed, can do in the solution of the religious problem in a small town. In this place, under the old order, a resident or regular minister had not been supported in over twelve years. Jealousy and contention among the societies was common. They used a common church building, until it was decided to call one strong preacher of a different denomination and to abandon the old plan. The new society was formed Nov. 25, 1905, with 65 original members, 55 coming on confession of faith—the latter the fruit of a revival of over 50 conversions. The new church pays \$800 a year salary. Not only has adequate preaching been secured, but the worship has been enriched by a large choir and orchestra, and the service of the church to the community has been much increased.

Grand Isle has a Methodist parsonage and preacher. Its Methodist church has been sold and the proceeds given for the renewal of the Congregational building. South Hero has a Congregational preacher and parsonage and two church buildings. These two towns, with their ministers, work together after a four-cornered plan—each preacher speaks in his own local church and in the church of his companion pastor every Sunday. Happy will be the day when half of the people in each of these towns will follow the example of others in the state in sacrificing personal preferences to more useful ends.

Cambridgeport has an undenominational church that works well. Its church building is union.

Bridport, Guildhall, Bakersfield, and Perkinsville have recently had Church Federations which have failed. The first two of these places especially need Christian unity, but if special personal leadership is not given death must work further purification before such can be realized. The old Union churches at Huntington and Huntington Center are failures. These two needy fields call for dominant Christian leadership under single denominational control.

The Vermont Inter-denominational Comity Committee was organized April 6, 1899, in a meeting held at Montpelier. It was formed after the pattern of the Maine Committee. The Methodist Presiding Elders of the State were its chief instigators. Its chief object seems to have been to curb the excessive propagandism of denominational interests. Such an agency was then and still is greatly needed. As such it has been effective only as an organized sentiment. It has had neither authority nor inclination to promote local reform or to settle difficult cases. As to the practical results of its past work it is generally considered a failure. Its weakness lies in the fact that the persons who compose it are on both sides of the same question at once. As Presiding Elders and Missionary Secretaries their business is to forward denominational interests while as Comity workers they are supposed to suppress them.

During the past year however, the committee has done investigation work of importance. A commission of one man from each of five leading denominations was chosen to report on the over-churching communities of the State, and the means of remedying this difficulty. This commission sent out nearly four hundred letters of inquiry to the churches, and from the one hundred and seventy-two responses valuable conclusions are reached. They were reported at the annual meeting of the Comity Committee at Montpelier, November 21, 1906, and will be embodied in the next section of this report.

Since the future of this committee seems to be in doubt a word of recommendation is given. Its present organization is a substantial beginning. It should embrace other Protestant denominations in the State, in particular the Protestant Episcopal. It should embody and forward the work of the Newport Federation and similar movements. Its work of research should be done by parties other than its members, but who are scientifically trained, and without denominational bias, and who care only for the Kingdom. Its propagandism should be chiefly that of exact, up-to-date instruction. It should seek fellowship with the larger movement outside of the State.

Three recent investigations have been made of conditions in Vermont with respect to Church Federation. The first was made in 1905 by the author of the present report, under the auspices of the Carnegie Institution at Washington, Department of Economics and Sociology. It consisted of personal interviews, statistical computations, and first hand observations as well as of correspondence. Most of it is given in brief form in The Christian Advocate (New York), March 29, and April 5, 1906. The second investigation is the one by the Commission of the Inter-denominational Comity Committee. The third is the one now being reported, which has had special reference to church unions and federations now existing.

Since the acts and conclusions of the three investigations are at our disposal, acknowledgment hereby being made to the Carnegie Institution and to the Comity Committee for the use of data, it seems best to make a summary of the information that is now available.

(1) Some communities are better off with two or more churches. The first of the above mentioned investigations thus concludes since the multiplication of local churches by two, in three computations, have been seen to multiply church membership per town by 3.3, 4.1, and 2.5 respectively. The second, because such churches often live prosperously.

(2) The first investigation explains the above conclusion by the observation that the sectarianism of social class or caste is greater than that of creed. Special study of thirty cases shows that, as a rule, when two distinct social grades exist in the church of a one-church community there is difficulty, while different churches in the same communities may accommodate the different social strata with prosperity.

(3) A large number of Vermont communities are over-churching. The first investigation found that fifteen out of twenty-eight communities in twenty average Vermont towns intensively studied were over-churching—six of them extremely so. The second shows that seventy-one out of one-third of the Protestant ministers in Vermont consider their communities as over-churching. Over-churching means financial waste and the betrayal of the Christian integrity of the church.

(4) The existence in Vermont of seventeen examples of successful church unions, federations, and single churches by federation methods, indicates beyond question the practicability of church federation and union—where needed and properly applied—as an adequate means of solving the religious problem of the small town.

(5) The multiplication of so-called Union churches is inadvisable. The social principle of them is defective. That method is most effective which disappears when its work is done. The best results are in churches of single denominational affiliation. Church Federation in any form is only a means to an end.

(6) Church Federation in its third aspect, of which the Newport Federation is an example, is of great importance for Vermont and should be more generally used.

(7) The investigations agree that the Church Federation method of restoring the essential unity of religious forces must be applied, when needed, with special regard to local conditions.

(8) There is extreme danger that the forwardness in federation work of the Congregationalists in Vermont will react unfavorably upon federation as a method of solving local religious problems. The federation method would lose its Christian value should it become the instrument of denominational zeal.

(9) The investigations concur in the strong inference that while the propagandism of the Protestant Episcopal church in small towns is commendable it is of doubtful Christian worth. It has too often bred sectarian strife.

(10) The one thing that a united Christianity in Vermont demands is expert scientific information concerning both local and general conditions. Such knowledge should be fearless and unbiased and thus able to curb excessive denominational zeal, to guide the local initiative, and to prepare the local and general movements to cooperate to the best advantage.

## The Annual Statistics.

Only on the 30th of March did the statistics go to the editor of the year book, and even then three churches are missing. Of these, Leicester is clearly extinct, and the other two, Barton and Bristol, are evidently at best suffering a partial paralysis.

The report, however, is in general encouraging. Very few churches having any measure of life are without a pastor. The membership total has risen to 22,092, a gain of 277 from last year. This gain includes the transfer of 152 members of the former Christian church in Randolph to the new church there of our order, but is not wholly accounted for in this way. The increase of the non-resident membership to 5411 (last year the number was 5270) cuts the gain in resident membership to 136. The additions by confession, 615, are somewhat above the average for the last ten years, though nearly 200 below the number reported last year. The merger at Randolph has added 300 to the additions by letter, making the unprecedented number of 793, while the same transaction increases the removals by letter by 148, making this number 607. It will be seen that the members of the former Congregational church are entered both as removed and received.

There is a gain of 156 in Sunday school members, making now 18,955. Young people's societies are reported from one church more than last year, but the membership still decreases, the total, 5373, being 597 less than last year. Families have increased from 18,202 to 18,376.

Benevolence is reported at \$51,067, a gain of \$3309. The gain is shared by all the denominational objects except Home Missions, the Sunday School society and Ministerial Relief, and also by undenominational benevolences. The amount of home expenses, \$221,311, is \$20,953 less than last year. The churches have invested funds amounting to \$372,586, a gain of \$32,589.

On the whole, so far as the statistics show, our churches in Vermont have had a year of more than average prosperity.

—[J. M. Comstock in the Vermont Missionary.]

## Bellows Falls 1907.

As already announced the annual gathering of the W. H. M. U. will be in Bellows Falls, May 29.

It is not too early to begin to give our women some hint of the feast of good things which the program will afford. Dr. A. C. Herring, the new secretary of the C. H. M. S. and Dr. Frank K. Sanders of the C. S. S. and P. S. will be the evening speakers. Mrs. C. M. Stevens will be present from the McIntosh school, also Miss Annie Tepper, a Polish graduate of the Schaeffer Training school in Cleveland.

These with papers by Mrs. Turner, of St. Johnsbury, and Mrs. Van Patten, of Burlington, and the various reports from all departments of the union work will furnish a full and enjoyable program.

Neither is it too early for each auxiliary, club, and contributing society to begin to anticipate the pleasure of the meeting and to plan for representation. —[From the April Vermont Missionary.]

## Vermont Handicrafters.

A society to be known as the Vermont Handicrafters has been organized in Burlington with officers as follows: President, Miss Helen Turk; vice president, Mrs. Frederick A. Richardson; secretary, Miss Elizabeth Van Patten; treasurer, Miss Mabel L. Southwick; chairman of the jury committee, Mrs. I. C. Smart; chairman of the town committee, Miss Harriet Wright; chairman of the lace committee, Miss Katherine Whitcomb; chairman of the state committee, Mrs. J. E. Taggart; chairman of the sales committee, Mrs. H. R. Watkins.

The aim of the society is to promote work of a high standard in the various handicrafts; to furnish a market for such work; to cultivate a better appreciation of art products; and to encourage a fraternal feeling among workers.



Vermont's Secretary of Agriculture.

The CALEDONIAN takes pleasure in presenting this week a portrait of the efficient secretary of the board of agriculture, Hon. George Aiken of Woodstock. Mr. Aiken is superintendent of the Billings farm, one of the most progressive farms in our state, and has been for several years the practical head of

## In Memoriam.

Gerald Edwin Hall.

Gerald Edwin Hall, youngest child of Capt. Edwin and Susan Hall, was born in Barnet, Jan. 2, 1864, and died in St. Vincent hospital, New York, Oct. 21, 1906.

Capt. Hall, of the 6th Vermont Cavalry, was killed in the siege of Petersburg, April 2, 1865, leaving a wife and three children. The two youngest, Nellie and Edwin, lived with their maternal grandparents in Sutton until the marriage of their mother, to Edson Wells, of Whitefield, N. H., in 1875, thereby giving them a good pleasant home, and a kind, loving father. After the death of Mr. Wells in 1884, Gerald Edwin went to Lynn, Mass., where he lived until some two years ago, when he went to New York, and entered the employ of George Leonard. While in Lynn he was in the office of Childs & Kent, expressmen. He was a genial, honorable, and upright man, making and keeping many friends. Oct. 2, 1906, he was stricken with typhoid fever, and removed to St. Vincent hospital. There he received the best of care. His mother, Mrs. S. A. Wells, of Craftsbury, went to New York, Oct. 8, and remained with him until the end, Oct. 21. Miss Lulu Philbrick, of Saugus, Mass., his fiancée, to whom he was to be married in the spring, was with him the last week of his life. George Leonard proved himself a true friend to him and his dear ones. May he be equally blessed in time of need. Many friends from New York and other places were present at his funeral held at the home of Mrs. H. E. Philbrick, 98 Vine St., Saugus, Mass., Oct. 23, whence he was laid to rest in Riverside Cemetery, Saugus. The many floral tributes expressed the love and esteem of his many friends. The tributes included a pillow from Mrs. S. A. Wells; standing wreath and pillow from Lulu B. Philbrick; wreath from Lilla M. Philbrick; casket bouquet from Blanche T. Philbrick; white pinks from George Leonard and son; a standing wreath from friends in Lynn; a standing cressent from friends in New York; and bouquets from John Clary, Florence and Jessie Bogart, John Wood and Albert Dodd, Mr. and Mrs. Cushman, Mr. and Mrs. Tullam, Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton.

Of the near relatives he leaves a mother, Mrs. S. A. Wells, of Craftsbury; a brother, Ira S. Hall, of West Wego, La.; and a sister, Mrs. C. Fred Farnham, of West Ellis, Rumford, Me.

"Fold him, oh Father! in Thine arms,  
And let him henceforth be  
A messenger of love, between  
Our human hearts and Thee!"

## White Robin in St. Johnsbury.

One of our most observing bird students writes the "Listener" in the Boston Transcript under the initials "H. F." as follows:

My Dear Listener: In your entertaining column in the Transcript of Saturday the 23d you seen a little sceptical regarding the white robin reported in Utah. Some half-dozen years ago such a bird was about the house of Mr. Austin A. Annis in this village for some weeks, keeping company with other robins. It was entirely white, and some who saw it were quite sure that it had the pink eyes characteristic of other robins. You mention the fact that some robins remain through the winter in Rhode Island. The same is reported from a town north of us here in Vermont, a flock remaining in a certain piece of woods every winter. As to the song of our robin you are right in calling it finer than that of its English namesake, but I think not many who hear the other thrushes would agree with you in calling his song finer than theirs. The hermit thrush, Wilson's thrush and the wood thrush are all fine singers, and the best of our northern woods. If you are near some grove in Vermont just after sundown in May you will be glad that you are a Listener.

The streets of Boise, Idaho, are sprinkled with hot water. The city and county buildings are heated during cold weather without the use of fires, and subscribers to the city waterworks system get hot water all the time without the expense of stoves. All this has been accomplished by the harnessing of an inexhaustible hot spring.

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